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REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Addendum*

* The present document contains information received after the publication of document A/51/36 of 18 October 1996. The complete report will be issued as Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 36 (A/51/36/Rev.1).

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Cooperation with United Nations agencies and programmes in support of human rights

1. The work of the International Labour Organization (ILO) as a whole sets out to contribute to the promotion of democracy and human rights. In the past 12 months its activities in the fields of both promotion of international labour standards (currently 177 conventions, with over 6,250 ratifications, of which 7 fundamental instruments - Conventions Nos. 29 and 105 on forced labour, 87 and 98 on freedom of association, 100 and 111 on elimination of discrimination in employment and 138 on the minimum age of entry into employment - have received the highest numbers of ratifications) and technical cooperation (strengthening of national institutions and assistance to representative organizations of employers and workers) have shown good results.

2. An important innovation was the Director-General's campaign, launched in May 1995, for the universal ratification of the seven fundamental ILO conventions mentioned above. In replies to his letters, member States have either announced new ratifications, reported that serious debate was going on about future ratifications or explained the substantive reasons blocking ratification. Many of the latter countries have since received technical advice on how to overcome these obstacles. Since the initiation was launched, 20 new ratifications of these human rights instruments have been registered.

3. The supervisory bodies of ILO continue to deal with a large number of complaints and representations dealing with human rights instruments: for instance, the Czech Republic (Convention No. 111); Peru (the freedom of association and discrimination conventions); and Myanmar (the forced labour conventions). The ILO Committee on Freedom of Association (set up in accordance with the special procedure concerning allegations of violations of trade union rights) deals with an average of 100 cases concerning around 50 countries from all regions of the world; a direct contacts mission to examine allegations on the spot visited Australia during recent months.

4. During this period, ILO continued to be represented in UN bodies dealing with human rights issues. This ensures that the principles embodied in international labour standards are taken into account in the work of other organizations dealing with issues of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, racial and sex discrimination, the rights of ethnic minorities and the rights of children, inter alia.

5. In reports to the Commission on Human Rights and its subsidiary bodies, ILO highlighted its activities to eliminate discrimination against women (including participation in the Fourth World Conference on Women, held at Beijing, in September 1995); migrant workers (the 1994-1995 interdepartmental project on migrant workers completed its work having produced several studies; an interregional project to combat discrimination against migrant workers continues, covering 11 industrialized migrant-receiving countries); disabled workers (it was decided to prepare a general survey on the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159) in 1997 and activities continue following the call of the World Summit on Social Development for effective measures to bring to an end discrimination against this group); and workers of the occupied Arab territories (for the eighteenth successive time the Director-General presented a report to the International Labour Conference outlining discrimination against Palestinian workers).

6. The promotional activities of ILO included tripartite seminars and workshops, technical assistance on draft labour legislation and publications, in particular the ILO law on freedom of association (1995), the fourth edition of the Digest of decisions and principles of the Freedom of Association Committee (1996) and the Committee of Experts' Equality in Employment and Occupation: Special Survey on Convention No. 111 (1996). Studies were prepared (publication forthcoming) on affirmative action in employment: ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities and enterprise-level practices concerning HIV/AIDs.